

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSYJAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

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EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR KINTNER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, XC

SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST ASIA IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT: A VIEW FROM BANGKOK

INTRODUCTION:

1. EXCHANGES ON WHAT WE ARE OR SHOULD BE DOING IN

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THE INDIAN OCEAN (NEW DELHI 5616, 8067, AND RELATED

TELEGRAMS), DISCUSSION OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PRC THREAT TO SOUTHEAST ASIA (MANILA 6127 AND RELATED TELEGRAMS), DEPUTY SECRETARY INGERSOLL'S LETTER OF JUNE 13, PUBLIC REEXAMINATION IN THE U.S. OF THE NATURE OF DETENTE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS, AND THE CURRENT EXAMINATION BY THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT OF FUTURE U.S.-THAI RELATIONS HAVE TOGETHER PROMPTED ME TO TRY TO PLACE U.S. INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WITHIN A GLOBAL CONTEXT. THE EFFORT HERE IS TO EVALUATE THE IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA TO THE UNITED STATES IN TERMS OF OUR TOTAL WORLD INTERESTS AND THE STRATEGIC FORCES IMPINGING ON THE AREA.

2. SOME ADDRESSEES HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON EARLIER DRAFTS OF THIS TELEGRAM. MANY OF THEM INDICATE THAT THE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND IN THE UNITED STATES IS STILL TOO UNCLEAR TO PERMIT ANY FINAL CONCLUSIONS ON WHAT OUR POLICY IN THE AREA SHOULD BE. I NONETHELESS INVITE YOUR COMMENTS AND CRITIQUE OF THE THOUGHTS SET FORTH BELOW WITH THE HOPE OF PROVOKING A DIALOGUE ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT, BUILDING ON THE EXCHANGES AMBASSADORS SULLIVAN AND MOYNIHAN EARLIER INITIATED. PERHAPS WE CAN HELP WASHINGTON DEFINE FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA (AND THE SURROUNDING WATERS): ITS RELATION TO OUR WORLDWIDE INTERESTS; OUR GOALS; WHAT WE ARE WILLING TO PAY TO ACHIEVE THEM; AND THE MOST PROMISING POLICIES TO PURSUE OUR GOALS. WE MIGHT DISCUSS THESE ISSUES FURTHER AT THE EA CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE. I BELIEVE THAT A GREATER DEGREE OF CONSENSUS ON THE OVERALL PLACE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA IN U.S. CALCULATIONS IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT NOW TO FORMULATING AND CONDUCTING OUR RELATIONS WITH THAILAND, PARTICULARLY SINCE WE MAY WISH TO PRESERVE FOR THE UNITED STATES CERTAIN POLICY OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE RELATING TO OUR STILL CONSIDERABLE PRESENCE HERE.

STRATEGIC ASSUMPTIONS:

3. ALTHOUGH SOME WILL CERTAINLY DISAGREE, THIS PAPER ASSUMES THAT THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC FACTORS NOW IMPINGE ON SOUTHEAST ASIA:

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(1) THE UNITED STATES IS A PACIFIC POWER;

(2) SOUTHEAST ASIA'S MAJOR IMPORTANCE IS THAT IT IS A STRATEGIC CROSSROADS FOR THE WORLD IN WHICH FOUR OF THE LEADING POWERS (THE UNITED STATES, JAPAN, THE PRC AND THE USSR) ARE ALREADY HEAVILY INVOLVED OR ARE SEEKING TO INCREASE THEIR INFLUENCE;

(3) COMPETITION AND CONFLICT AS WELL AS COOPERATION STILL CHARACTERIZE RELATIONS AMONG THE LEADING POWERS. THE ENERGY CRISIS, THE WORLD POPULATION EXPLOSION AND ALMOST UNAVOIDABLE FOOD SHORTAGES --ALONG WITH INFLATION AND A VARIETY OF RAW MATERIAL SCARCITIES -- MAY ACCENTUATE ECONOMIC CONFLICT IN THE SEVENTIES. AT THE SAME TIME THE STILL TENSE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST FOLLOWING THE 1973 OCTOBER WAR, THE RAW USE OF FORCE IN CYPRUS AND THE ONGOING CONFLICTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA DENY US THE LUXURY OF IGNORING MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS;

(4) THE SOVIET UNION IS THE PRINCIPAL THREAT TO WORLD STABILITY AND U.S. GLOBAL INTERESTS;

(5) WITH THE VAST INCREASE IN SOVIET MILITARY POWER SINCE 1950, THE RELATIVE GLOBAL POWER OF THE U.S. VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION RELATES IN PART TO THE CAPACITY AND DETERMINATION OF THE PRC TO MAINTAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM THE USSR;

(6) THE CURRENT SIGNIFICANT THREAT TO A STABLE AND PEACEFUL SOUTHEAST ASIA IS NORTH VIETNAM SUPPORTED BY ITS CURRENT MAJOR PATRON, THE SOVIET UNION.

COMPETING INTERESTS TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIA:

4. PRIOR TO THE U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE INDOCHINA CONFLICT, FEW U.S. OFFICIALS REGARDED SOUTHEAST ASIA AS VITAL TO U.S. INTERESTS. CURRENTLY, THE UNITED STATES INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA DERIVE IN LARGE PART FROM HAVING BECOME HEAVILY ENGAGED IN THIS REGION FOR MORE THAN A DECADE (REGARDLESS
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OF WHAT LED US INTO THE CONFLICT). MANY AGREE THAT THE MAJOR TASK NOW BEFORE US IS TO DRAW DOWN OUR MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE NOT LEAVE THE PEOPLES OF THE AREA MORE VULNERABLE TO AGGRESSIVE PRESSURES THAN BEFORE WE CAME. SUCH AN UNSTABLE OUTCOME COULD AFFECT ADVERSELY OUR RELATIONS WITH JAPAN AND PERHAPS ALSO WITH THE PRC. MOREOVER, AWARENESS IS INCREASING THAT WE MUST NOT FORECLOSE ON OUR OPTIONS TOO PRECIPITOUSLY UNTIL WE KNOW BETTER WHAT WE WANT IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD IN RELATION TO OUR FUTURE GLOBAL POSTURE. MAINTAINING THESE OPTIONS INVOLVES POLITICAL AS WELL AS FINANCIAL COSTS, WHICH ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE WITH TIME.

5. THE U.S. INTEREST IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IS RELATED TO SOVIET AND PRC INTENTIONS TOWARD THIS AREA AND ITS SUR-

ROUNDING WATERS:

(1) THE SOVIET UNION'S INTEREST IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE STRAITS OF MALACCA EMANATES IN PART FROM ITS APPARENT AIM OF CREATING AN UNRESTRICTED SEAWAY CONNECTION BETWEEN ITS BLACK SEA AND EASTERN SIBERIAN MARITIME PORTS. A SIZEABLE SOVIET COMBAT AND COMMERCIAL NAVAL PRESENCE, WITH GOOD PORTS OF CALL ALONG THIS SEAWAY, WOULD ALSO GIVE THE SOVIET UNION, AS AN EXTRA BENEFIT, GREATER INFLUENCE ON MANY OF THE COUNTRIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AS WELL AS ON THE PRC AND JAPAN;

(2) THE PRC'S ULTIMATE INTENTION TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIA APPEARS TO BE SOME FORM OF MODERN DAY HEGEMONY, BUT AT LEAST FOR THE NEXT GENERATION THE PRC WILL NOT LIKELY HAVE THE CAPACITY TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL;

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(3) IF EITHER THE SOVIET UNION OR THE PRC WERE ABLE TO DENY JAPAN ACCESS TO PERSIAN GULF OIL AND TO SOUTH-EAST ASIAN MARKETS, JAPAN MIGHT CONSIDER USING ITS ECONOMIC POWER TO SUPPORT ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER IN THE SINO-SOVIET CONFLICT, OR (LESS LIKELY) STRENGTHEN ITS SELF-DEFENSE FORCES TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS;

(4) THE ACHIEVEMENT OF SOVIET OR CHINESE ASCENDANCY IN
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SOUTHEAST ASIA, WOULD, HOWEVER UNLIKELY THIS POSSIBILITY MIGHT NOW SEEM, GREATLY STRENGTHEN THAT POWER IN THE SINO-SOVIET STRUGGLE AND MIGHT DETERMINE THE STRUGGLE'S OUTCOME.

6. NONE OF THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS WOULD FAVOR THE HEGemony OF ANY OUTSIDE POWER OVER THE REGION (ALTHOUGH SOME WOULD PREFER ONE RATHER THAN ANOTHER IF FORCED TO CHOOSE). THE ASCENDANCE OF ONE POWER IN THE REGION COULD HAVE DESTABILIZING EFFECTS AND BE DETRIMENTAL TO U.S. EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A WORLD IN WHICH GREAT POWER COOPERATION AND PEACEFUL COMPETITION MIGHT BECOME MORE NORMAL THAN CONFLICT. IN THIS LIGHT, THE U.S. OBJECTIVE IS TO PREVENT SOUTHEAST ASIA FROM COMING UNDER THE DOMINANT INFLUENCE OF ANY SINGLE POWER. FOR THIS WE WANT: (A) A COOPERATIVE JAPANESE ALLIANCE IN WHICH JAPAN CONTINUES ITS POLICY OF EQUIDISTANCE FROM MOSCOW AND PEKING; (B) SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING THEIR INDEPENDENCE IN THE FACE OF SUBVERSION EFFORTS WHICH DERIVE THEIR MAIN IMPETUS FROM PEKING'S EXAMPLE, AND ESPECIALLY IN THE CASE OF VIETNAM, SOVIET ARMS SHIPMENTS; (C) THE CONTINUED CREDIBILITY OF U.S. SECURITY COMMITMENTS IN EAST ASIA AND SOUTHEAST ASIA; AND (D) STRONG AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES.

7. AS LONG AS THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE DRIVES MOSCOW AND PEKING TO COMPETE FOR INFLUENCE THROUGHOUT ASIA, IT WILL SERVE U.S. INTERESTS, TO SEEK TO MAINTAIN BETTER RELATIONS WITH BOTH CHINA AND THE SOVIET UNION THAN EITHER ONE ENJOYS WITH THE OTHER. THIS MAY REQUIRE IN THE SHORT TERM SOME INDIRECT U.S. BOLSTERING OF CHINA IN THE US-USSR-PRC TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT GIVING THE PRC MORE

THAN IT COULD OTHERWISE EARN OR DESERVES IN ASIA. PEKING'S JUDGEMENT OF OUR PERFORMANCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA MAY INFLUENCE ITS LONGER-TERM APPROACH TO MOSCOW. BY HELPING TO CHECK SOVIET INFLUENCE AND POSSIBLE PENETRATION INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE ENCOURAGE PRC CONFIDENCE IN ITS ABILITY TO WITHSTAND THE DIRECT SOVIET PRESSURE EXERTED ALL ALONG CHINESE FRONTIERS.

8. WE MUST MAKE CERTAIN THAT AS WE, PERFORCE, DEAL WITH MOSCOW NO CONTRADICTIONS DEVELOP BETWEEN WHAT PEKING WANTS
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FROM US AND OUR PERFORMANCE. PEKING WANTS THE UNITED STATES TO DIVERT SOVIET RESOURCES AND ATTENTION FROM THE SINO-SOVIET FRONTIER BY SUSTAINING SIGNIFICANT NATO CAPABILITY AND BY FRUSTRATING SOVIET DIPLOMACY IN ASIA WHILE THE CHINESE PIN DOWN IMMENSE SOVIET RESOURCES THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE SUSTAIN SOVIET POLITICAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL MANEUVERS AGAINST WESTERN EUROPE OR THE MIDDLE EAST. AS PART OF ITS ANTI-USSR EFFORT, PEKING HAS ITS OWN PROGRAM TO DEVELOP CLOSER RELATIONS WITH WESTERN EUROPE. IT HAS ENCOURAGED WESTERN EUROPE'S UNITY, AND HAS EVEN GONE SO FAR AS TO GIVE MORE THAN TACIT SUPPORT FOR THE EEC AND NATO. OBVIOUSLY, THE U.S. WILL REAP CONSIDERABLE BENEFIT IN ITS RELATION WITH PEKING BOTH BY STRENGTHENING U.S. TIES WITH WESTERN EUROPE AND BY PREVENTING AN EXPANSION OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN ASIA.

9. OVERLY EAGER PURSUIT OF DETENTE WITH THE SOVIETS, DISAGREEMENT WITH OUR ALLIES IN WESTERN EUROPE, AND A TOO RAPID U.S. DISENGAGEMENT FROM EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIA (ESPECIALLY IF IT ENCOURAGED INCREASED SOVIET INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND A JAPANESE TILT TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION), COULD, TAKEN TOGETHER, CONVINCE CHINA THAT HER DRAWING OFF SOVIET STRENGTH HAS NOT BEEN REPAID IN KIND. IF ONLY FOR TACTICAL PURPOSES SOME CHINESE FACTIONS MAY THEN CONCLUDE THAT TEMPORARY RECONCILIATION WITH MOSCOW IS A SAFER BET THAN A LONGER-TERM COMMITMENT TO AN AMERICAN CONNECTION.

10. TO AVOID SUCH A MAJOR SETBACK TO OUR GLOBAL POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION, THE U.S. SHOULD EMPLOY THE FOLLOWING MEANS OF INDIRECTLY BOLSTERING THE PRC: (A) LINKING THE PROGRESS OF DETENTE TO THE PROGRESSIVE REDUCTION OF THE SOVIET CAPABILITY TO RESORT TO FORCE (SUCCESSFUL SALT II); (B) MAINTAINING A POSITION OF STRENGTH ON THE SOVIET WESTERN FRONT THROUGH THE REANIMATION OF THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE; AND (C) REORIENTATING OUR NUCLEAR STRATEGY AND GREATLY IMPROVING OUR OWN AND ALLIED CONVENTIONAL MILITARY, PARTICULARLY NAVAL, POWER.

11. THE MOST DIFFICULT IS (A), BUT WE ARE NOW PURSUING
IT VIA BOTH NEGOTIATIONS AND UNILATERAL U.S. DEFENSE AC-
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TIONS. THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN BOTH BONN AND PARIS AND
THE RECENT AFFIRMATION OF ATLANTIC SOLIDARITY PRESENT NEW
OPPORTUNITIES WITH RESPECT TO (B). SECRETARY SCHLESINGER
HAS BEGUN TO MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF (C), IF CONGRESS DOES
NOT SIMULTANEOUSLY GUT BOTH THE DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AID
PROGRAMS.

12. ALSO IMPORTANT AS A BELLWETHER OF OUR RELIABILITY,
WILL BE THE U.S. PERFORMANCE DURING THE CONTINUING DIS-
ENGAGEMENT FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA. AS OF LATE-1974 THIS
PERFORMANCE IS A MATTER OF CONCERN TO MANY OF THE NATIONS
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. WHILE THE U.S. CONGRESS SEEMS TO BE
INCREASINGLY INDIFFERENT TO ADVERSE DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH-
EAST ASIA, NORTH VIETNAM, WITH SOVIET SUPPLIED EQUIPMENT,
CONTINUES TO PURSUE ITS AIMS IN SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA
BY BOTH POLITICAL AND MILITARY MEANS; SOME 50,000 NORTH
VIETNAMESE TROOPS REMAIN IN LAOS.

13. THE MAJOR DEFICIENCY IN THE U.S. SOUTHEAST ASIA
PERFORMANCE APPEARS TO BE THE RELUCTANCE OF SIGNIFICANT
MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS TO SUPPORT OUR SOUTHEAST
ASIAN INVOLVEMENT THROUGH TO A MINIMALLY SATISFACTORY
CONCLUSION. ALTHOUGH CONGRESS DOGGEDLY SUPPORTED OUR
PARTICIPATION IN THE VIETNAM WAR, IT IS NOW RELUCTANT TO
PROVIDE THE LEVEL OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE
NECESSARY TO MAINTAIN THE STABILITY OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND
CAMBODIA. THERE APPEAR TO BE DIVERGENCIES AS TO HOW
U.S. OFFICIALS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA PERCEIVE THE SITUATION
AND HOW IT IS PERCEIVED IN THE CONGRESSIONAL FOREIGN
AFFAIRS AND ARMED FORCES COMMITTEES. WE MUST THEREFORE
COMMUNICATE OUR APPRAISAL MORE EFFECTIVELY AND DEVELOP
A STRATEGY FOR THIS AREA WHICH CONGRESS WILL SUPPORT,
OR AT LEAST TOLERATE, UNTIL OUR ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT
IS NO LONGER NECESSARY. WE WOULD REACH THIS SITUATION
WHEN NONE OF THE GREAT POWERS OR NORTH VIETNAM SAW
DOMINANCE OR A PREPONDERANCE OF INFLUENCES IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA AS POSSIBLE OR NECESSARY TO ACHIEVING ITS GOALS.

IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD THAILAND:

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14. OUR POLICY TOWARD SOUTHEAST ASIA IS PREMISED ON THE ASSUMPTION A STRIP OF INDOCHINA (THE MEKONG DELTA, WESTERN CAMBODIA AND WESTERN LAOS) WILL STAY OUT OF NORTH VIETNAM'S HANDS AND PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE BUFFER TO PROTECT THAILAND. THE CONTINUED SURVIVAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM DESPITE THE MOST DIRE PREDICTIONS OF IMMINENT DOOM HAS TAUGHT US THE RESILIENECY OF THAT SOCIETY. THE ABILITY OF THE KHMER REPUBLIC AND THE COALITION GOVERN-

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MENT IN LAOS TO RESIST NORTH VIETNAMESE DOMINATION IS LESS CERTAIN. WHILE WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO OPPOSE NORTH VIETNAMESE DOMINATION OF INDOCHINA THROUGH ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA, AND DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FOR A TRULY NEUTRAL LAOS, WE SHOULD PLAN FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT AN ADEQUATE BUFFER BETWEEN THAILAND AND NORTH VIETNAM WILL NOT EXIST.

15. A NORTH VIETNAMESE VICTORY IN INDOCHINA WOULD SERIOUSLY THREATEN THE STABILITY OF THAILAND; EROSION IN THAILAND WOULD THREATEN THAILAND'S ASEAN PARTNERS TO THE SOUTH WITH A DIS-INTEGRATION THAT COULD EXTEND TO THE STRAITS OF MALACCA. THESE STATES WOULD THEN VIEW U.S. SUPPORT FOR THAILAND AS AN EVEN MORE CRUCIAL INDEX OF OUR INTEREST IN THE INDEPENDENCE AND SECURITY OF THESE REMAINING SOUTHEAST ASIAN STATES. THE IMPACT OF A HANOI VICTORY IN INDOCHINA (WHICH MANY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WOULD VIEW AS RESULTING FROM A U.S. LOSS OF WILL REFLECTED IN A WITHOLDING OF NECESSARY MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID) COUPLED WITH THE CONTINUED REDUCTION OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT FOR THAILAND COULD BE DISASTROUS TO THE STABILITY OF THE REGION. THE PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY FROM THIS SITUATION WOULD BE THE SOVIET UNION, BECAUSE OF BOTH ITS MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH NORTH VIETNAM AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN APPREHENSIONS OF THE PRC'S CAPACITY FOR INTERNAL SUBVERSION.

16. IT IS AGAINST THIS POSSIBLE SCENARIO THAT WE MUST CONSIDER OUR INTEREST IN AND POLICY TOWARD THAILAND. WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO PRESERVE OUR CREDIBILITY AND OUR INTERESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA EVEN IF MOST OF INDOCHINA FALLS. AT THE VERY MINIMUM WE WOULD NEED TO MAINTAIN ADEQUATE LEVELS OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC SUPPORT TO THAILAND AND, PERHAPS, MAINTAIN A PHYSICAL MILITARY PRESENCE--BUT ON THAI TERMS. WE MIGHT EVEN NEED TO MAKE A STRONGER COMMITMENT TO THAI SECURITY, PERHAPS THROUGH A FORMAL TREATY, IF THE RTG SO DESIRES AND THE U.S. CONGRESS IS WILLING. SUCH A COMMITMENT AND CONTINUED ASSISTANCE TO MEET THE SECURITY THREAT AND CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE REQUIRED UNTIL THE THAI ECONOMY AND POLITICAL SYSTEM, AS WELL AS ITS TIES WITH OTHER SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS, WERE STRONG ENOUGH TO RESIST EXTERNALLY-SUPPORTED SUBVERSION OR OTHER POLITICAL-MILITARY "AGGRESSIONS" BY THE NORTH VIETNAMESE.

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17. IN ADDITION TO THESE STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS, HOWEVER, WE

HAVE ANOTHER REASON FOR CONTINUING TO SUPPORT THAILAND. THE THAI ARE NOW ENGAGED IN A SERIOUS EFFORT TO BUILD A DEMOCRATICALLY INCLINED, RESPONSIVE POLITICAL SYSTEM. IF THEY SUCCEED, THAILAND WILL STAND IN SHARP AND FAVORABLE CONTRAST WITH SOUTH KOREA, SOUTH VIETNAM, AND EVEN THE PHILIPPINES. IN ALL THREE OF THESE COUNTRIES WE ORIGINALLY JUSTIFIED OUR EXTENSIVE SUPPORT ON THE GROUNDS OF PROMOTING FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY. FEW BELIEVED US, AND EVENTS HAVE VINDICATED THIS SKEPTICISM. THE THAI REPRESENT AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO "PUT OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS". WE NOW HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK CONGRESS WHETHER IT IS WILLING TO ASSIST DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY IN THE SUPPORT OF POPULARLY-ELECTED LEADERS IN THAILAND. THAI SUCCESS WITH OUR ASSISTANCE, MOREOVER, WOULD ALSO STAND IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE NORTH VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP TO THE EAST, AND BURMA'S ANEMIC SOCIALISM TO THE WEST. COUPLED WITH THE RECENT MALAYSIAN DEMONSTRATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES, A SIMILAR THAI EXAMPLE MIGHT HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT IN THE PHILIPPINES WHERE A RETURN TO A MORE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT REMAINS POSSIBLE. CONSEQUENTLY OUR FAILURE TO SUPPORT FRIENDLY FORCES IN THAILAND, THUS FORCING THE THAI TO ABANDON THEIR NEW "CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION" TO THE VAGARIES OF POWER COMPETITION BETWEEN THE USSR AND PRC AND PROBABLY NORTH VIETNAMESE SUBVERSION, WOULD BE A TRAGEDY OF MAJOR IMPACT.

CONCLUSION:

18. THERE ARE MANY DIFFICULTIES INTELLECTUALLY AND PRACTICALLY IN ATTEMPTING TO RELATE U.S. EFFORTS IN ONE PART OF THE WORLD (SOUTHEAST ASIA) TO OUR ENDEAVORS ELSEWHERE AND VICE VERSA. YET THE BENEFITS FROM ACTING "IN THE ROUND" MAY COMPENSATE FOR THE ENERGY EXPENDED. SUCH AN APPROACH REQUIRES THAT WE PURSUE POLICIES THAT ARE STRATEGICALLY LINKED IN THE THREE MAJOR CONFRONTATION AREAS--WESTERN EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND SOUTHEAST ASIA. IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE U.S. SHOULD SEEK, AS SPECIFIC NEEDS ARISE, TO CHECK SOVIET INTRUSIONS INTO THE AREA AND LIMIT THE PRC'S ENDEAVORS TO ESTABLISH SUASION OVER THE REGION. THE MOST PRESSING REQUIREMENT IS TO LIQUIDATE THE ONGOING CONFLICT

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OVER INDOCHINA IN A MANNER WHICH RESTORES OUR REPUTATION FOR EFFICACY, CONSISTENCY, AND RELIABILITY AND DEPENDABILITY, EVEN IF THIS TAKES SEVERAL MORE YEARS TO ACCOMPLISH. IF WE FAIL IN INDOCHINA, WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE INCREASED TANGIBLE SECURITY COMMITMENTS TO THAILAND OR ELSE RISK THE EROSION OF OUR INFLUENCE IN THE REMAINDER OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

19. MAY I HAVE YOUR VIEWS?

KINTNER

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Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t1974099/aaaaahjo.tel
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